

Subcommittee on Health
Statement of Representative Ginny Brown-Waite on H.R.
92, the Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act
Statement
4/26/2006
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Thank you for allowing me to appear before the Subcommittee today.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on my legislation, H.R. 92, the *Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act*.

When I first came to Congress in 2003, I introduced this measure after hearing of the long wait times facing some veterans in need of health care at the VA. Frankly, the stories many of us have heard about these delays are unacceptable. These holdups can worsen the veteran's health and impose a greater financial hardship on everyone involved. In some situations, these wait times can be the difference between life and death.

Events in Iraq and Afghanistan also remind us of the urgent matter at hand. With thousands of soldiers returning from the front lines, many of whom will require immediate health care, VA medical facilities face a difficult task. Unless Congress takes action, wait times will only continue to grow.

My legislation would help ensure that our nation's veterans receive timely health care. For veterans seeking primary care from the VA, my bill would establish a 30-day timeframe as the standard for access to medical services. This standard would cover from the time an individual schedules a visit until they actually see a medical provider. In the event this standard is unachievable, the VA would have authorization to contract for care from a private provider. At the same time, my bill also grants the VA some flexibility in meeting this standard. For those facilities in geographic areas that have a 90 percent or greater rate of complying with this requirement, the contracting provisions would not be necessary. Finally, this legislation would establish comprehensive reporting requirements on wait times for individuals seeking care at VA medical facilities.

As Members of Congress, we have an extraordinary responsibility to veterans. These brave men and women answered the call in our time of need; it is only fitting that we take care of them in their own. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the critical issue of wait times. I would be happy to take any questions regarding my legislation.

Thank you.

